prospective investors in the tourism field and also provides Central financial assistance to State/Union Territory Governments for construction of tourism facilities in different parts of the country based on the *inter-se* priority and availability of funds. Meetings are organised periodically to consult the State Government about various issues.

(c) No, Sir.

Potential of Ladakh as Tourist Destination

1639. SHRI KUSHOK THIKSEY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in an interview to a National Newspaper 'he has cited the potential of Ladakh region as an important tourist destination' ; and

(b) whether Government have any specified plans and project to tap potential of the region as an important tourist destination?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of India has initiated following steps to promote Ladakh region as an important tourist destination:

(i) Promotion of Ladakh region as a mystique, cultural and adventurous tourist destination in the overseas tourist generating markets by overseas Government of India Tourist Offices.

(ii) Holding of prominent festivals like Sindhu Darshan, Bauddha Mahotsav and Hemis festival regularly in Ladakh region to attract international as well as domestic tourists.

(iii) Arranging of familiarisation tours for media and tour operators to create awareness about Ladakh region in overseas countries.

(iv) Regular production of tourist brochures, video films CD ROMs and posters on Ladakh region by the Department of Tourism and overseas office.

(v) For improvement of Tourist Infrastructure in the region the following schemes have been undertaken:

(a) Supply of White Water Sports equipment

(b) Setting up of Tourist complex at Karsha (Zanskar), Lamayuru and Nubra and Tourist Bungalow at Leh

(c) Supply of tents for Nubra valley

(d) Renovation of Gompas at Hemis,

(e) Refurbishment of Pethub Monastry, Leh and Sahasthaling Gompa at Nobra, Leh.

(f) Meditation facility in the International Health Centre at Cholamsar, Leh

(g) Construction of Public Conveniences at six places at Gompas in Leh

(h) Construction of Sindhu Darshan Ghat at Shey, Leh.

Tourist Protection Force

1640. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have mooted the idea to set up a Tourist Protection Force with personnel drawn from Delhi Police to protect the tourists from touts and thugs;

(b) whether this force will operate only in the NCT of Delhi;

(c) if so, whether tourists visiting other tourist spots like Agra, Jaipur and other cities/centres all over the country will be left to the mercy of touts; and

(d) whether Government will approach all other States to form such a Tourism Protection Force in their States to cover tourist spots?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Tourism Department of Government of NCT of Delhi has taken up with Commissioner of Police, Delhi to set up a Cell to provide Tourist Protection.

(b) This will provide security and safety to foreign and domestic tourists in Delhi.

(c) The States of Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh etc. have already set up Tourist Police.

(d) The Central Department of Tourism has requested the State Government to have tourism legislation and set up Tourist Police to safeguard